Museum for Human Rights on New Canada Stamp

On August 20 Canada Post celebrated the opening of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) in Winnipeg, Manitoba with a single stamp, issued in a booklet of ten stamps. The Museum is the first national museum to be built in Canada since 1967 and the first ever to be located outside of the capital region.

The mandate of the Museum—the only museum in the world solely devoted to human rights awareness and education—is "To explore the subject of human rights, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, in order to enhance the public's understanding of human rights, to promote respect for others, and to encourage reflection and dialogue."

Canada's newest national museum was purposefully situated in Winnipeg at The Forks, where the Red and Assiniboine rivers meet on Treaty One land, where the first numbered Treaty was signed between the Canadian government and "First Nation" (Indian tribe) leaders, near the historical location of Métis occupation and Louis Riel's provisional government, an area that is stated as having been a meeting place for over six thousand years.

One of the missions of the Museum is to ensure the accuracy, integrity and credibility of its research and collected knowledge, serving as a trusted international source for human rights learning, while at all times encouraging critical engagement with museum scholarship and content—a task that is particularly difficult when facts are hard to ascertain in areas of conflict and rights violations. Another related goal is to foster an appreciation for the importance of human rights through informed dialogue.

The Museum exemplifies Canadians' commitment to freedom and democracy, on the basis of the feeling "that the citizens of Canada are endowed with inherent human rights and responsibilities, codified over time in treaties, policies, laws and declarations."

As seen on the stamp, the building itself is significant for its architectural symbolism of human rights advancement. From the moment visitors enter through its massive stone roots, to the time they emerge in its light-filled Tower of Hope, the goal of the CMHR is to impress them with the power of human rights.

The ambition mission is to have the Museum stand "as a beacon for visitors from around the globe…[with] ramps of glowing alabaster criss-cross galleries designed to challenge, motivate and uplift. Multi-sensory exhibits explore human rights concepts with an international scope, but through a uniquely Canadian lens. An amazing encounter with human rights awaits families, tourists and scholars alike."

Finally, in an era when transparency has become all-important, the CMHR "aspires to offer its visitors an inspiring encounter with human rights while exceeding Canadians' expectations for balance, transparency, sound business practices and meaningful public consultation."

The stamp designer was Robert L. Peters of Winnipeg. The Official FDC bears an August 20 Winnipeg, MB, cancellation.

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